

The Linacre Quarterly

Volume 70 | Number 2

Article 1

May 2003

Letters to the Editor

Catholic Medical Association

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Recommended Citation

Catholic Medical Association (2003) "Letters to the Editor," *The Linacre Quarterly*: Vol. 70: No. 2, Article 1.
Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/lnq/vol70/iss2/1>

Letters to the Editor

Homosexuality

To The Editor:

The article in the *Linacre Quarterly*, which came into my hands today, entitled "Sodomy or 'Homosexuality'" (November, 2002) is really quite remarkable. In a few short pages it manages to combine a heady mix of pious platitudes, muddled medieval theologising, bigotry and ignorance in about equal measure, to create an essay on homosexuality which tells us absolutely nothing at all about the subject, but a great deal about the authors. In a way, if it were not so vicious, it would be sad, even funny.

The authors start by wrong-footing themselves completely. The old myth of Genesis and Augustine's own slant on it are taken as being the basis of God creating mankind: it seems this was to "fill up the empty places in heaven" which had apparently been left vacant when some rebel angels rather rudely decided that they had had enough of God's authoritarian rule. Mankind is apparently supposed to marry and have children solely to fill up these empty spaces (space is, it seems, a bit limited up in Heaven) and to raise "saints" for that purpose. The fact that there was no Garden of Eden, no Adam and Eve, no Original Sin, thus nullifying the whole basis of theology, passes the authors by. They are, it seems, living in about 1203, not 2003. Marriage and partnership as bonds of love, which may not seek children, are presumably offences against the all-

demanding God: true children of God "offer themselves in the very act of marriage to become parents of children destined to fill up the empty places of heaven" (it must be a bit lonely up there, it seems). This will be news to most people who get married. And incidentally, just how do the authors presume to know so much about what their God plans and wants?

God, it goes on, slowly leading up to its *piece de resistance* of the "evil of sodomy", is "not the cause of any evil or tendency to do any evil." This is strange from two people supposedly versed in the Bible: both Isaiah and Job specifically state that God created good and evil, and the Creed states that nothing exists that was not made by God. So just how has evil managed to creep in and mess up the whole scheme so carefully made by the all-powerful and all-knowing God? Well, two thousand years of Christian arguments have not cracked that one. Somehow it crept in, and while Manichean dualism of good versus evil may be condemned officially, in fact it colours all of theology. God is opposed by a principle he seems quite unable to contain, and the image of God in man has been tainted. This we are told was because certain rebel angels went against God, though just how perfect beings made in his image could somehow become so imperfect and God was unable to do anything except chuck them out of the heavenly courts is also not explained. It appears to have been quite a

muddle up in those heavenly courts, with God not quite in control of the whole setup.

It is part of the basic weakness of such theologizing as the article presents that, like classical theology, it misinterprets the biblical tale and the serpent. In fact, nowhere in the tale is there any mention whatever of the serpent being Lucifer ("The Light Bearer!"), which is anyway simply the planet Venus, the morning star. It is simply "the most subtle of all the creatures which Yahweh had created", and which apparently walks on its belly only after it is cursed (Did it stand upright before?). The serpent, symbol of instinctive wisdom, shows Adam and Eve that their eyes are not open, i.e., they are unconscious and do not know good and evil, which are known only to Yahweh. The serpent thus brings consciousness, which Yahweh does not want them to have. Yahweh wishes them to stay "innocent", i.e. ignorant.

A similar tale of the gods resisting humanity's urge to consciousness is told in the myth of Prometheus. Centuries of Christian misinterpretation have given us Augustine's dire interpretation of "original sin" passed down through all generations (mostly unfairly!) through sex. This tells us a lot about Augustine and the sex-obsessed church fathers, little about human beings in general. Anyway, the whole myth of Eden is taken from Sumerian sources, where the Great Goddess with her serpent of wisdom gives mankind the fruit of knowledge. Patriarchal Judaism distorted the tale for its own ends.

The two authors seem equally ignorant about what they refer to

(most significantly) as a "worship of the devil", that is, "the cult of Phallicism". Odd that Christian thinkers should see this as devil worship! This tells us a lot, too, about Christian attitudes to sexuality. They also seem ignorant when they refer to "certain mutilations" in history related to phallic cults. The rite of circumcision was introduced by the early Hebrews precisely because of the phallic connotations of Yahweh, a male god who was symbolized by phallic stones. No such rite exists to this day amongst Jewish women — carrying the "mark of Yahweh" on the penis was and is a mark of Yahweh's phallic cult, and is a mutilation which is in fact really a symbolic castration.

So, having got through the major bit of theologizing and myth making, we come to homosexuality. Here, and quite typically of Catholic argument, the word "love", that two people of the same sex should be deeply committed in love and partnership, expressed, as always with us physical and biological beings, bodily, is never used. Instead, the heavily slanted word "sodomy", itself of extremely dubious usage, since the "sin of Sodom" in the Bible myth is not specified, is used throughout. That is, anal intercourse: and here we see the Freudian horror of the authors at such an act, which also ignores the fact that very many gay men do not practice it, and women gays not at all. It is of course, practiced by many heterosexuals. "It cries to heaven for vengeance." Does this mean imprisonment, torture, burning at the stake, shooting by firing squad? We need to be told. After all, the Church used to burn such

people, thus doing its God's work. Like contraception and masturbation it stops the sole reason for having sex, (basically a nasty business with nothing to do with saints), i.e. having children for the kingdom of heaven. Again, this will be news to most couples having children, and could be used as a good excuse for neglecting their earthly needs, as has indeed been the case in our religious past.

A bit more theology follows: Manicheism is "an ancient evil related to good and evil." What is this supposed to mean? Is not Christianity related to good and evil — its dualism inherited from Persian thought? "Promiscuity causes sterility", which would be useful news to those who indulge it and are always in danger of having endless streams of unwanted babies. Perhaps it could be a new form of birth control? St. Augustine, that once sex-crazed and half reformed theologian is called in, no doubt haunted by his own past of "foul offenses against nature." There is nothing "unnatural" in nature: such an idea is an oxymoron. In actual fact, homosexuality exists throughout nature, and has been shown to be innate in some animals, no disorder, just a natural variant of brain structure. Such research has been carried out in the USA and here. The balance of male/female elements in animals, which includes human beings, is very fine. We are all bisexual, originating from male and female elements, and just how that is balanced in any individual varies naturally and hugely. There is in every human being a homosexual element. In some, this is the predominant one, perfectly natural

for them. Homosexuality itself is not a problem: attitudes towards it are. Incidentally, the term "homosexual" was coined in the 1860s, not, as the authors state, the 1890s. As a human sexual orientation it has existed since time began, and as such must of course be seen as part of the whole pattern of life and creation.

Finally, it can of course be argued that the term "unnatural", so favoured by these authors, is a meaningless term, highly coloured by judgemental attitudes and preconceived notions. Anything which happens in nature is of course "natural". Homosexual bonding occurs so widely in the animal kingdom — some animals have been shown consistently to ignore the opposite sex in coupling, even when the females are on heat — that it is "natural." An orientation to same-sex bonding and partnerships in human beings is as "natural" and "normal" for them as is heterosexual bonding for others.

In no way can it be altered, as Freud and Jung showed decades ago. What can be altered is the removal of conflict and guilt which prevent the gay person from living a full life as a gay person. The Church, by instilling into gays a sense of guilt and by demonizing them in condescending ways only furthers their inability to pursue their own individuation.

Having found deep and rich happiness and growth as a human being in years of close gay relationship with my partner, like most gays I find it deeply insulting when such drivel as the article is written by men who know nothing about the subject. But, as stated, throwing stones at others is always

an easy way out of one's own conflicts. Fortunately humanity in the once Christian world has grown a tiny bit, and does not need mothering by the Church, which continues to decline. The wind of the Spirit blows where it will, you cannot tell whence or whither: it is blowing down the walls of the churches.

The recognition by some US states and here in Europe of same sex partnerships akin to marriage is part of the ever growing recognition of human rights (which of course the Catholic Church has always resisted, as in the Syllabus of Errors) and validation of individuals' rights to live and love without interference from State or Church. Love obeys no rules, Eros is a winged god who chooses when and how he wants lovers to love, irrespective of gender. Sadly, love has clipped wings for the Church: Amor reversed is Roma, power in place of love, priestly control in place of human freedom, and obedience to a tyrannical God.

How very sad that such a piece was even accepted for publication, reinforcing bigotry, prejudice, hatred, received notions, and making gay people out to be possessed by the devil, thus marginalizing them and demonising them as recipients of the shadow side of the authors. There are few things more nauseating than holier-than-thou moralizers. Perhaps the authors could get on their knees, do penance, and try to learn what psychology and human love might mean. This, alas, is unlikely. Ignorance is so much easier. The moralist who condemns his fellow man is the enemy of the very Christ he pretends to follow as his exemplar. So go forth, Paul

Byrne and Rev. Rinkowski, and cast the first stones.

— **Roger Payne**
London, UK

P.S. If heterosexual marriage is the "norm" for human beings, maybe the authors could explain why it is forbidden for priests, also why so many priests, we learn, indulge in sex with boys.

Two Matters

To the Editor:

First, I would call attention to the recent claim by Raelians that they successfully cloned a human being. There is confusion about the difference between reproductive and therapeutic cloning.

Scientists insist that the former is for the purpose of human reproduction while the latter is for curing diseases by replacing cells from sick people with stem cells from embryos created in a laboratory from the sick person, killed and their stem cells removed to replace diseased cells, with no rejection. In other words, scientists want to create embryos in order to kill them by extracting their stem cells for replacement of diseased cells in other sick human beings. That should be clearly understood.

When you compare reproductive and therapeutic cloning, the comparison seems to tilt in favor of the former. At least the Raelians want to preserve and create life however they may be twisted and, finally wrong. The scientists want to create life in order to kill it, which is in fact infinitely worse.

Ironically, the Raelians come out the more humane and more life-

relating than the scientists. In the final analysis, however, both methods are fundamentally sick and inhumane. Both are the mad scientists creating and destroying human life. As Voltaire once put it, God created man in His image and man has returned the favor.

On a second matter, John Paul II, after consulting with the bishops of the world, and in union with them, proclaimed abortion and euthanasia evil under any circumstances. This is now infallible doctrine on morals for all Catholics, from which there can be no dissent (*Evangelium Vitae*, pars. 57, 62, 65).

Any Catholic proclaiming himself "pro choice" is to that extent not a Catholic and not in full communion with the Catholic Church. He/she should refrain from the reception of communion because he/she is not in communion with the Church.

This is a difficult thing to say but it is so important that there can not be the slightest doubt in the mind of the whole world where a particular Catholic stands. Those Catholic politicians who vote to extend, permit, or finance abortion are in a state of grave sin and should cease receiving Holy Communion because they are not in full communion with their church.

— **Peter J. Riga**
Houston, Texas

A Retraction

To the Editor:

First, I want to thank you for your excellent work with the *Linacre Quarterly*.

I am writing in regard to the *Linacre Quarterly*, I believe vol. 69,

no. 3, and an article which was published on the crisis in the Church and homosexuality (*Editor's note: "A Contribution to the Debate About the Ordination of Homosexuals," August, 2003*).

I was listed as one of the authors of that article. I want you to know that I never saw the article before and had no idea that my name would be attached to it. Had I seen it, I would not have consented to the use of my name for numerous reasons.

I did recognize some ideas in that article which I had shared previously with Dale O'Leary and Gene Diamond. In fact, some of them were incorporated into the Catholic Medical Association's statement on the crisis in the Church, "Letters to Bishops," which was published in *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* in November and which is posted on the CMA website.

I am writing to ask that a retraction be published in the *Linacre Quarterly* stating that I was not an author of the article.

— **Richard P. Fitzgibbons, M.D.**
W. Conshohocken, PA